

January 19, 2017
www.mbcch.org

THE Baptist Record

Vol. 141
No. 3

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

BRIEFS

KY. LEADERS DISAGREE ABOUT ABORTION LAW

FRANKFORT, Ky. (BP and local reports) - Kentucky Attorney General Andy Beshear, a Democrat, is refusing to defend the state's new law banning late-term abortions if a lawsuit challenges its constitutionality, drawing a sharp rebuke from Republican Gov. Matt Bevin. "This law is clearly unconstitutional based on our review of numerous federal appellate rulings," Beshear said Jan. 12. The new law, passed by the state's General Assembly on Jan. 7, bans abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, the generally-accepted medical point at which babies can survive outside the womb.

D.C. CHURCH CALLING LESBIAN CO-PASTORS

WASHINGTON (BP) - The decision of Calvary Church in Washington, D.C., to call a legally-married lesbian couple as co-pastors has led to a call for "prayerful dialog" between state convention leadership and the church, which left the Southern Baptist Convention in 2012 but continues to cooperate with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention (DCBC). Meanwhile, R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the situation presents a "very dramatic challenge" and suggested DCBC should disaffiliate with the congregation.

MONSTER DEER TAKEN BY SO. BAPTIST HUNTER

NASHVILLE (BP) - A 47-point buck deer harvested by Tennessee Southern Baptist Stephen Tucker is one step closer to official certification as a world record for whitetail deer after a four-judge panel representing the Boone and Crockett Club measured the deer's rack Jan. 9 and gave it a score of 312-3/8 in the non-typical rack category, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency reported in a press release. The score exceeds the previous world record of 307-5/8 set in 2003 in Albia, Ia. Tucker was recently baptized at First Church, Hendersonville, Tenn.

N. Korea still tops in persecution

Communist country ranks most dangerous 16 consecutive years

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) - For the 16th consecutive year, North Korea ranks as the most dangerous country for Christians - and persecution of followers of Jesus in the totalitarian communist dictatorship is continuing to rise, according to a new report.

The group's web site states, "Open Doors USA is a nonprofit organization focused on serving persecuted Christians through Bible & Gospel development, women and children advancement, and Christian community restoration." It is based in Santa Ana, Ca., and has been in operation for 60 years.

Release of the annual 'World Watch List from Open Doors USA came as religious freedom advocates are calling for U.S. President-elect Donald Trump to act in the first 100 days of his administration to protect Christians and other people of faith overseas. About 215 million Christians underwent "high, very high, or extreme persecution" last year in the 50 countries on the watch list, Open Doors reported

Jan. 11. Open Doors defines persecution as hostility endured by a person because of his identification with Christ. It can include loss of property, imprisonment, torture, rape, and death.

According to Open Doors, the top 10 countries where Christians face the most severe persecution and their totals on a 100-point system are:

- North Korea, 92 points.
- Somalia, 91 points.
- Afghanistan, 89 points.
- Pakistan, 88 points.
- Sudan, 87 points.
- Syria, 86 points.
- Iraq, 86 points.
- Iran, 85 points.
- Yemen, 85 points.
- Eritrea, 82 points.

The Open Doors list "is a crucial and sobering source of information to help Christians know how to pray and advocate for their persecuted brothers and sisters," said Travis Wussow, vice president for public policy and general counsel for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

"This advocacy makes a real difference in shaping U.S. policy, which can in turn play a crucial role in protecting the persecuted church around the world."

In written remarks for Baptist Press, Wussow encouraged "all believers to review the report and select one or two countries and pray for the church there

by name."

see NORTH KOREA on p. 8

First Church, Brookhaven embraces 'Tell Me, Tell Someone' emphasis

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

First Church, Brookhaven, is in many respects the classic First Baptist county seat church that can be found all over the South. The community is stable, as is the church - but there's still excitement to be found, according to pastor Greg Warnock.

"Our emphasis for this year is 'Tell Someone What Jesus Has Done for You,'" he said. This is also the 2017 emphasis of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. "This is sort of a refocus for



GREG WARNER (LEFT) AND JEFF DOREMUS

see BROOKHAVEN on p. 9

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Racist in our midst

Actor: I want to specify that abortion to help a minority group, would that be possible?

Planned Parenthood employee: Absolutely.

Actor: Like the black community for example?

Planned Parenthood employee: Certainly.

Actor: The abortion — I can give money specifically for a black baby that would be the purpose?

Planned Parenthood employee: Absolutely. If you wanted to designate that your gift be used to help an African-American woman in need, then we would certainly make sure that the gift was earmarked for that purpose.

Actor: Great, because I really faced trouble with offensive action, and I don't want my kids to be disadvantaged because of that. I want to help a black baby, I want to put it in his home.

Planned Parenthood employee: Yes, absolutely.

Actor: And we don't, you know we just think, the less black kids out there the better.

Planned Parenthood employee: (Laughs) Understandable, understandable.

Actor: Right, I want to protect my son, so he can get into college.

Planned Parenthood employee: All right. Excuse my hesitation, this is the first time I've had a donor call and make this kind of request, so I'm excited, and want to make sure I don't leave anything out.

The transcript is from a telephone call made to a Planned Parenthood office by an actor working for a student journalist at a pro-life magazine distributed on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles. The student journalist, Lila Rose, made several similar calls to Planned Parenthood offices around the country, and exposed the organization's racism and greed nearly every time.

Rose went on to found the pro-life group, Live Action, and continues her undercover and behind-the-scenes investigations into the deep-rooted evil that is Planned Parenthood — and the abortion industry in general.

You don't read about Lila Rose and her work in the mainstream news media, do you? Likewise, you probably didn't get to read about the large group of pro-life, African-American pastors who protested Planned Parenthood's racism outside the organization's national headquarters in Washington, D.C. after they learned the results of Lila Rose's undercover investigation.

Read it here, then: Planned Parenthood, the recipient of more than \$557 million annually in federal government funding (translation: your tax money), is a racist organization and has been since its earliest days. No rational person who has studied the history of Planned Parenthood can believe otherwise. Its founder was a rabid racist by the name of Margaret Sanger, who coined the word "eugenics" to explain her philosophy that lesser forms of mankind like Negroes should not be allowed to proliferate beyond control.

"We do not want the word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population," she famously wrote in 1919 — the same year she began her Negro Project.

Lila Rose's telephone inquiries would indicate that Sanger's Planned Parenthood, which exterminated over 227,000 babies last year, hasn't changed its philosophy in the nearly 76 years since Sanger forthrightly proclaimed the organization's mission.

Of course, Planned Parenthood argues that their beloved founder is being quoted out of context, and that as a race the organization is no longer under the control of Sanger, who died in 1966.

Really? If Planned Parenthood has changed its ways, why is it that the organization locates nearly 80% of its "clinics" today in minority neighborhoods? Why are 26% of all abortions in this country performed on African-Americans, who comprise only 13% of the population? Why do half of all African-American pregnancies end in abortions? (Statistics courtesy of the Idaho Values Alliance.)

In this present day of increasing racial hostility and accusations of racism in America, we're overlooking one of the most obvious offenders: the abortion industry.

The secular news media don't have the courage to tell us this story. Most (but certainly not all) politicians are also afraid to take on this issue. Judges, who are uncomfortable even talking about it, let alone the general population, yawn.

Sadder of all, many Christians have turned their backs as well over fifty million of our fellow human beings, of all races, have been slaughtered in the womb as if they are a pestilence.

Why can't we change that?

Science, or faith? You choose

"We don't get religion," New York Times executive editor Dean Baquet said, his words sparking a whirlwind of attention. The "media powerhouses," as Baquet put it in an National Public Radio interview on Dec. 8, "don't get the role of religion in people's lives."

As a Christian, I can understand Baquet's observation. In order to "get" religion, one has to "get" faith. This often seems to be a challenge for those who see themselves as intellectuals. They have a faith; however, their faith is limited to their understanding of the thoughts and observations of other "intellectuals" — thoughts and observations collectively known as science.

It is understandable why many place their faith in science as the ultimate explanation of what we observe as we analyze our surroundings. Science provides a means by which the physical circumstances which affect us can be justified and explained.

Because of the testable and re-creatable nature of scientific principles, we develop confidence, or faith, in our scientific explanations. Science, however, has its limits.

Science, for example, argues for a spontaneous natural occurrence of the formation of the universe, yet struggles to explain what happened prior to this moment of origin. Scientists continue to argue about how something — that something being the entirety of the universe — came from nothing.

Different theoretical explanations are described in scientific "models" of the origin of the universe. Consider, however, that the renowned scientist Stephen Hawking has explained that, in order to be valid, a model of the origin of the universe does not have to prove reality; it only has to "work" in a theoretical argument.

Science, in other words, only has to appear to be correct.

Faith in a spiritual Creator, however, demands a much higher standard. For spiritual faith to be true, the spiritual Creator has to be eternally valid. Such a Creator is not bound by our concepts of scientific truth or physical reality. Such a Creator would be, instead, the author of all physical law and would therefore supersede these very concepts and, at the same time, would not invalidate them.

Indeed, belief in this Creator does not deny an instant of origin. In fact, Genesis 2:2 describes chapter one of Genesis as, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven" (New American Standard Bible).



Guest opinion
with Doug Parkin

The concept of a Creator reaches beyond the finite point of creation into the eternity of an existing supreme being. Like train tracks stretching into the distance, the principles of both spiritual faith and scientific faith converge into the acknowledgement of a single moment of origin of existence, an instant of physical creation.

At this point, however, these faiths instantaneously diverge to the greatest extreme imaginable.

Those who practice a scientific faith often do so in a derogatory manner toward those who practice a spiritual faith. Spiritual faith is often condemned as insupportable by physical evidence and theoretical equations, with its practitioners called unenlightened, fearful, and naive.

As Christians, however, we trust in what we have personally experienced in God through our relationships with Jesus Christ. We concede that we can't prove God or Christ by any equation, but neither can anyone disprove by equation our experiences of faith. As the Bible states, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, King James Version).

It is very difficult to consider a hope as reality and to then trust what is evidenced only by that hope. Yet, that is the very nature of spiritual faith.

My hope is that Baquet's recognition that he does not "get" the role of religion in people's lives would lead him and others like him to explore the possibilities of Christian faith. They may find it surprising that they are the ones who are restricted in their enlightenment, limited in their universal experience to only the physical realm while fearful of a co-existing spiritual reality, and naive of the incomprehensible fullness of living a spiritual life based on faith in Jesus Christ.

Parkin is a pharmacist in Jackson and a member of First Church, Jackson. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

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Postmaster:
Send changes of address to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

BAPTISTS

VOLUME 141 • NUMBER 3 • ISSN 0005-6770
Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$11.39 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for supporting Missions. Periodical postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member Association of State Baptist Periodicals. News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertisers — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

Harthcock: 'Retirement was not in his vocabulary'

CHIANG MAI, Thailand (BP and local reports) — "I'll retire when the devil retires." Clarksdale native Gary Harthcock faithfully lived out his famous words on four continents and multiple avenues of service.

Friends recalled Harthcock's watchwords upon his death Jan. 5 at age 97 of an abdominal aortic aneurysm. "That quote was taped to his desk, and he told me he read it every day. He has truly lived that out," said Kathryn Monroe. "Retirement was not in his vocabulary."

Harthcock and his wife Evelyn were married 69 years before she passed away in September 2015. They served together overseas for 40 years in six countries.

International Mission Board (IMB) worker Phil Wardell served with the Harthcocks in Cambodia. "It was such a blessing to have these 'grandparents' join our team, and they were truly a team in every respect of the word in terms of how they ministered together in the city."

"There are very few people that have left such a legacy in missions, as they have given birth to [spiritual] sons and daughters in the Caribbean, Liberia, Guyana, Mongolia, Cambodia, Thailand, and virtually in almost every country where they have visited since they began their marriage."

Harthcock was born in Clarksdale on July 7, 1919. He served as a patrol plane commander in the U.S. Navy during World War II, married Evelyn Dorothy White in 1945, and retired from active military service the next year.

Harthcock used his bachelor of science in agriculture degree from Ohio State University in a number of arenas, including starting a business building greenhouses. He eventually joined the staff of the Baptist State Convention of North Car-

"I'll retire when the devil retires."

Gary Harthcock missionary

olina and was later the director of Fruitland Bible Institute in Hendersonville, N.C.

The Harthcocks began serving with IMB when he was 56 and she was 55, first moving to the island of Antigua in the Caribbean. They developed irrigation systems on several islands and used agriculture to minister to the people.

Although they officially retired in 1985, they continued to work alongside IMB. Centered on loving, serving, and showing people Jesus, the couple continued through multiple short-term and volunteer mission assignments.

They moved to Liberia in 1986 with IMB's Master's Program to continue the ministry efforts of IMB workers who returned to the U.S. for home assignments. In 1992, the Harthcocks moved to Mongolia to teach English to medical doctors.

While serving in Mongolia with IMB's Master's Program, the couple wrote 85 lessons on the parts of the human body. These lessons were later published. The couple led 17 Mongolians to the Lord and started a church that was the first Christian church approved by the Mongolian government.

The Harthcocks' ministry with IMB continued in Guyana where they served for six months before they relocated to Cambodia in 1996 to teach English to Buddhist monks as well as doctors, surgeons, and medical professionals in hospitals.

The Harthcocks hosted birthday parties for Buddhist monks in their home and served spaghetti, French



GARY HARTHCOCK

bread, and birthday cake. As the Harthcocks shared the Gospel, several Buddhist monks made decisions to follow Christ and left the monastery, following the Lord in believer's baptism and joining the church.

As a result of their service as English instructors, the Harthcocks developed tools titled, Easy English Teaching, and wrote 19 booklets for teaching English to Buddhist monks and others. They tailored the publications to expose students to the Gospel.

In 1999 in their late 70s, the Harthcocks moved to Thailand and continued ministering and writing books, Bible lessons, and tracts that have since been translated

into seven languages and are used worldwide.

Gary was 82 and Evelyn was 81 years old when they completed their Master's Program assignments. The couple continued to serve using their own funds.

In his last days in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Harthcock wrote daily devotionals titled, Spiritual Food, that were emailed to people worldwide. He always addressed the emails to his "lovable worldwide family."

Philip Monroe, a member of that "worldwide family," said Harthcock's life influenced him in several ways. "First, I am so impressed with his perseverance in ministry. Until the very day he was diagnosed

with an aneurysm that would end his life in a few days, he remained faithful in teaching the Bible through daily devotionals he sent to over a hundred people every day.

"Second, only a few months ago, he finished another one of his books that spreads the Gospel through easy-to-read Bible stories in simple English. Third, he loved people. During these last days at the hospital, many hospital staff came to his room in tears and hugged him and showed respect for him."

"The consistent incarnational life that he has lived among a lost world has accompanied his continual verbal witness to the life-changing message of the Gospel."

Harthcock's life reminds Monroe of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

"This was Gary," Monroe said.

Harthcock is survived by his sister Margaret Varnell of Cleveland, Tn.; his brother Thomas B. Harthcock Sr. of Newton; and foster daughter Carmen Fitzsimons of Summerville, S.C.

In addition to his wife Evelyn, he was preceded in death by his parents Martin Bates Harthcock and Thelma Bobo Barmer Harthcock of Clarksdale; his sister Doris Helen Harthcock Wallace and his brother Martin Bates Harthcock Jr.

Harthcock's memorial service was held Jan. 14 at Chiang Mai Ram Hospital in Chiang Mai.

Memorials, condolences, and tributes can be shared at www.forevermisseds.com/gary-harthcock/#about. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations in his honor to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering at imb.org/lottie-moon-christmas-offering.

Texas church exceeds \$1M in single day missions offering

ROCKWALL, Texas (BP) — Twenty-seven years ago, Steve Swofford came to First Church in Rockwall, Texas, with a vision for what



SWOFFORD

a church could do to support missions around the globe. At the church's annual missions offering day last December, that dream was realized in a single Sunday when church members gave more than one million dollars.

"I had prayed secretly in my heart that someday before I retired we might get a million dollars but I never dreamed it would be this year," Swofford said.

For his entire tenure as First Church, Rockwall's pastor, Swofford has designated the first Sunday of each December as a day for the church to give generously toward reaching the ends of the earth with the Gospel, and generosity has increased each year.

"We're charged to win the world, and it's an expensive venture to try to win the world," he said.

Every November, Swofford preaches on the importance of missions and invites missionaries to share their stories in hopes of reminding the local body of its importance in Great Commission endeavors. Over the years, the pastor said he's seen the congregation take hold of the charge.

"They have caught the vision. It is now important to them, too. It's not just my deal. It's their deal now. That's what makes all the difference."

All the donations collected from the annual missions day offering are divided between state, national, and international missions, with 10% going to

the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, 20% to the North American Mission Board's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, and 70% to the International Mission Board's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

"We start in our own backyard, but we can't stay there," Swofford, a recent member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, said of supporting missions at every level. "We've got to go all the way around the world."

Prior to pastoring First Church, Rockwall, Swofford

was pastor at two other churches, one with about 100 members, the other with about 400. He has led an annual world missions offering day at all three churches and encourages pastors with congregations of every size that the generosity seen at First Church, Rockwall, can be achieved anywhere.

Making missions a financial priority, he noted, is never a hindrance. "Every time I've ever done it over these 40 years, the regular offering was over budget, and a lot of times twice the normal... I really strongly believe that God blesses the church that tries to bless the world."

It was at that time of the year, the close of the year, when people are thinking about what had taken place over the past 365 days. I had read several articles and some listings that dealt with both good and bad but generally focused on more of the bad things than the good things that had happened. Some of the article titles were like "The Ten Worst Events of the Past Year" or "The Ten Most Significant People Who Died in 2016." The bad seemed to be where most of our interest was and where most of our feelings were buried in that year. I got to thinking about it — why doesn't good feel as good as bad feels bad? Think about it. You can live for ten years, a full decade, and never have the flu the first time. You might, in passing, be thankful that you were healthy, but not to a deep feeling of appreciation and praise, but then you get the flu. Oh my, every bone is aching. Everything is going wrong. You're not sure you're going to live through the night, and it is actually horrible and unforgettable. All the days of good health are forgotten, and even though you are appreciative of the good health, it wasn't necessarily euphoric and the truth is the good doesn't seem to be as good as the bad feels bad, especially if you have the flu.

Think about the joy and delight that comes when a child is born. What a blessing. One of life's rich, wonderful joys, a new life has come into this world, yet after several months and life settles into normal routines of feedings and changings, and most of the cooings and cooings have either gotten less or stopped, the good doesn't seem as earth shaking as the good seemed at the moment. But on the other side: what if you lose a loved one, a person who has been very dear to you, maybe a family member, maybe just a dear friend, and it seems that the wonderful good that comes when the good things happen in your life like that precious



Why Doesn't Good Feel as Good as Bad Feels Bad?!

baby are nowhere to be compared to the pain of the deep hurt that you feel when you lose someone? In fact, that pain will revisit you over and over again maybe for years to come. Now I may not have answers to why the good doesn't feel as good as the bad feels bad, but I do have some thoughts.

One thought is simply this; it seems that we human beings have a tremendous sense of entitlement. This didn't start with the millennials and it didn't come with just a new age of some descriptive group, it started with us as human beings touched by sin. It seems as though we feel when good things come our way that, "Wonderful. It's about time. I am deserving of that." If anything comes good our way, well, it should have. And I ask the question, "Well, why should it?" What have any of us done to deserve any of the Heavenly Father's avalanche of blessings in our lives and reality? The truth is that what we have done is nothing. For all

that we have ever done and all that we have ever received above zero is by the grace of God. Still, some of us maybe all of us are tainted by this attitude that we see reflected in the prodigal son who came to his father and he said, "Give me." The quote goes on to say, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" (Luke 15:12). He wanted his inheritance and he wanted it now. Truth is, the father didn't have to give him anything — now or even in the will. But this demanding spirit that I want what I want now and I want more of what I want and you need to make sure you give it to me, may live within all of us to some degree, and when we get the blessings, we often feel it's about time. I got mine. A sense of entitlement is not a healthy thing, and it's not a particular grace that looks good on a Christian's walk. Maybe it's one that maybe we need to push back on in order to realize that we are probably not deserving of any of what we have,

much of what we want. It is an oft-repeated phrase when I meet people and people are meeting each other. "How are you doing?" "Better than I deserve," they say. Well, that's true because you really were not in position to make a case before the God of Heaven that you deserve anything. It's all provided by Him.

The other thought that I have has to do with timing. Maybe we feel the good doesn't feel as good as the bad feels bad. For when God gives us good things, we don't fully know where it will lead. Whereas when we experience loss, hurt, pain, suffering, disease, death, we know all too well the depths of the loss and the enormous hurt that we feel. It's all there and it can be visited daily if we choose to do so. So what in the world do we do with the good that we ought to be giving thanksgiving for and the bad that we're trying to get over? Well, as you move into this new year, as it unfolds day by day before you, be blessed by the good. Develop within your own consciousness an ongoing sense of a gratitude attitude that nothing is going to get by you without saying, "Thank You, Lord." It will change your feelings. It will change your attitude just to live with some gratitude. There are people all around you who may be caught up in their own little world of self-importance who don't say thank you to anybody for anything. Fine. Just don't let that someone be you.

Also, while you're blessed by the good, don't get blasted by the bad. God is with you and will walk with you and encourage you and lift you in either situation. If it's good, He can handle that. If it's bad, He can handle that. So as you walk through the days of this new year, give the days to God, your life to Him, and celebrate good, and trust God in the center of the bad.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

First Person: How to have a successful mission trip

By Shane Pruitt
Correspondent

The number of U.S. Christians participating in short-term mission trips of a year or less has risen exponentially over the last 50 years, from 540 in 1965 to more than 1.5 million annually with an estimated two billion dollars per year spent on the travels, according to *Missionology Journal*.

Be wary of making these mistakes on short-term mission trips:

■ Believing you're the Savior. We must remember that we are not the hope of the world — Jesus is. What countries, cities, and people need is Jesus — not me and my

passport. At the very best, I can make a temporary impact. The Gospel will make an eternal impact. Give them Jesus.

■ Treating missionaries like travel agents. Missionaries are the best people to help plan the details of the trip. However, we must realize that is not their primary reason for being there. Their calling is to minister to the community, share the Gospel, and make disciples, not to be an on-call travel agent.

■ Going with our own agendas. Sometimes teams go on a mission trip looking for the missionaries, cities, and local ministries to meet their demands. Rather, missionaries, ministries, and communities need long-term partners who will encourage, energize, and invest in continuing the Kingdom work that has already begun there. Be a help, not a hindrance. Remember, if you make a mess and then leave,

"We must remember that we are not the hope of the world — Jesus is. What countries, cities, and people need is Jesus — not me and my passport. At the very best, I can make a temporary impact. The Gospel will make an eternal impact. Give them Jesus."

missionaries are the ones who have to stay and clean it up.

■ Operating as though they are on your turf. Be sure to respect culture, context, and history. Cultures need the Gospel, not a Western mindset or even the "American church." People will sing and do church differently than what you're used to. Praise God for that. There is a lot we can learn from people in different contexts.

■ Doing things for people that they can do for themselves. If painting a wall or handing out food is really a need in a place, invite people in those villages to do it with you

or, if our teams are going to do these projects alone, make sure that we're doing them with Gospel intentionality. Empowering people with the Gospel for change should always be our driving force.

■ Impressing people instead of empowering them. It's so easy to impress people with a certain skill set with which the Lord has blessed you. What if you spent that time teaching people to continue doing the same things once you left? That would be true long-term community impact.

■ Participating in poverty tourism. Our motivation

for missions cannot be to have a great vacation experience or to take photos of hurting people. You are part of something much larger than yourself.

■ Not asking before clicking. Don't turn your camera into a weapon. How would you feel if strangers were taking pictures of you, your children, and your home?

God is sovereign and His grace is sufficient. However, we can be aware of mistakes, learn from them, and make the changes necessary for healthy Kingdom expansion. We have an incredible opportunity to go in wisdom and with excellence, because our King deserves our best.

Pruitt is director of missions for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention in Dallas. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and length.



PRUITT

ERLC urges action on pro-life issues

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville has called on President-elect Donald Trump and the newly sworn-in U.S. Congress to act on six pro-life priorities.

"The pro-life community will be looking for 2017 to be a year in which protecting unborn human life is a top priority," Russell Moore, ERLC president, said in written comments for Baptist Press (BP). "Real gains are achievable, ones that will save lives and serve vulnerable women in the crosshairs of a predatory abortion industry."

"My prayer is that both Congress and the Trump administration will actively pursue these pro-life priorities for the good of women and unborn children in communities around the country."

Among the six selected issues, Moore and Travis Wussow, the recently-named ERLC vice president for public policy, urged Trump to reverse the abortion/contraception mandate on his first day as president.

The rule issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to implement the 2010 health-care law does not require congressional action for its repeal. The regulation requires employers to provide their workers with coverage for contraceptives with mechanisms that can potentially induce abortions and contains what critics describe as inadequate freedom of conscience protections for those who object.

"[B]ecause the HHS Mandate was created by an administrative rule and not statute, the process to reverse it can begin immediately after President Trump takes office," they wrote. "We urge President Trump to do so on his first day in the White House."

The other five pro-life recommendations with comments from Moore and Wussow:

■ **Making permanent the Hyde Amendment.** The amendment, first enacted 40 years ago, bars funds for abortion in various federal programs and is estimated to have saved more than two million lives. It has to be approved each year, however.

The No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act would ban all federal money for abortion permanently.

"The Hyde Amendment is a recognition that millions of Americans strongly object to allowing their taxes to be spent on what they believe to be the taking of a life," Moore and Wussow said. "It is time, once and for all, for the consciences of millions of Americans to be protected by the force of permanent statute: federal funds should not be used for abortions."

■ **Selecting a pro-life successor to the late U.S. Supreme**

Court Justice Antonin Scalia. The new president "must do more than simply appoint another pro-life vote to the Court; his task is to maintain the intellectual balance of power on the issue," they wrote. "Justice Scalia's influence on the American judicial system will be felt for decades. We should hope that his replacement would accomplish the same during his or her tenure on the Court."

■ **Eliminating all funds for Planned Parenthood.** The Planned Parenthood Federation of America and its affiliates, which constitute the country's No. 1 abortion provider, received \$553.7 million in government grants and reimbursements and performed nearly 324,000 abortions, according to the most recent annual reports.

Congress approved a year ago a measure that would have cut about 90% of Planned Parenthood's federal funds, but U.S. President Barack Obama vetoed it in January. A special panel in the House of Representatives has been investigating the organization's trade in aborted baby body parts this year and announced 15 criminal and regulatory referrals on Dec. 21. Two involved Planned Parenthood clinics.

Moore and Wussow said the ERLC will continue to support the investigative panel's work and the defending effort.

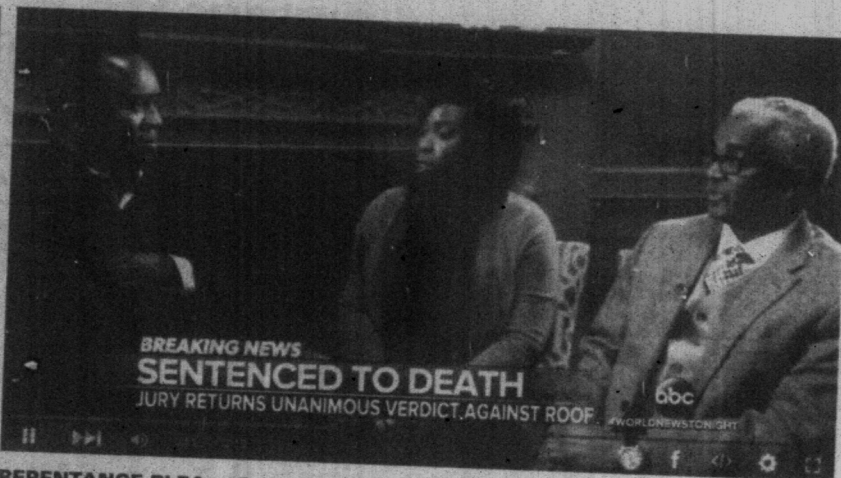
■ **Enacting the Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act.** The Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act would prohibit abortions on babies 20 weeks or more after fertilization based on scientific evidence that a child in the womb experiences pain by that point in gestation.

■ **Approving the Born-alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act.** The proposal would require a health-care professional to provide the same standard of care for a child born alive after a failed abortion as a baby born prematurely.

Moore and Wussow encouraged Christians to seek to influence lawmakers to support such policies but said it is not the only way they can exhibit their pro-life commitments.

"Whether through support of adoption, participation in the foster care system, or providing counseling to expectant and new mothers through pregnancy resource centers, pro-life advocates need to not only communicate the truth of the God-given dignity of humanity, but live it out in our local communities," they wrote.

ERLC will partner during January with Focus on the Family to again co-host Evangelicals for Life. This second conference on advocating for the dignity of all human life will be held Jan. 26-28 in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit evangelicals.life.



REPENTANCE PLEA — Family members of Myra Thompson, one of nine African American Christians killed during the June 17, 2015, massacre at Mother Emanuel church in Charleston, S.C., urged convicted killer Dylann Roof to repent after a jury recommended the death penalty. ABC's Steve Osunsami (left) interviewed Thompson's widow Anthony and their daughter Denise Quarles. (ABC Nightly News screen capture)

Families urge killer to repent before it's too late

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP) — Convicted murderer Dylann Roof should repent of the massacre of nine people he killed at Mother Emanuel church, the victims' survivors said after a jury recommended the death penalty Jan. 10.

"Judgment day is coming sooner for him than what he expected," Denise Quarles, daughter of massacre victim Myra Thompson, said on ABC News after the jury's decision was announced. "He definitely needs to [repent]."

Her father and Thompson's widow Anthony Thompson said "yes" in agreement.

Roof, an avowed white supremacist, affirmed his decision to kill the black worshippers as recently as the December 2016 sentencing phase of the trial, it was widely reported. Acting as his own attorney, he said, "I felt like I had to do it and I still feel like I have to do it," Roof said then, ABC News reported.

Myra Thompson, a 59-year-old wife and mother of two children, was among those Roof killed after they welcomed him to a June 17, 2015 Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (also known as Mother Emanuel AME) in Charleston, S.C. During the closing prayer, Roof began firing 77 rounds from a Glock .45 caliber handgun, reloading the 13-round chamber several times before leaving the church.

Melvin Graham, the brother of 54-year-old victim Cynthia Graham Hurd, also encouraged Roof to repent. "He's in God's hands now," Graham said in an

"He's in God's hands now, and if he turns his life around, if he makes a humble confession to God... he can join my sister and the other eight in heaven because God said, 'I will forgive you for no matter what you do, I will forgive you.'"

Melvin Graham
brother of victim

interview recorded by several news outlets, including PBS, outside the federal courthouse in Charleston, "and if he turns his life around, if he makes a humble confession to God... he can join my sister and the other eight in heaven because God said, 'I will forgive you for no matter what you do, I will forgive you.'"

"Just like when he showed no remorse here, when that time comes if he chooses not to show any remorse, then he again will determine his sentence," said Graham, a father and grandfather who lives in Goose Creek. "He has another chance."

Family members of the victims notably expressed forgiveness to Roof before the grand jury when charges were filed against the white supremacist, but Graham said he's still trying to forgive Roof.

"I'm a work in progress," Graham said during the interview, but expressed assurance that in time "peace will come."

Among Roof's victims was Emanuel AME pastor and legislator Clementa Pinckney. Emanuel's current pastor Eric S. C. Manning was not available to Baptist Press for comment, as he was in court hearing U.S. District Judge Richard Giesel officially sentence Roof to death, a church staff member told Baptist Press.

During the trial, Roof never expressed remorse for the crime and insisted that he is not mentally ill. "I have not shed a tear for the innocent people I killed," Roof wrote from jail days after confessing to the crime, according to the FBI. "I would like to make it crystal clear. I do not regret what I did. I am not sorry."

Roof laughed nine times about the killings during his recorded confession, the FBI said.

Roof has already requested an appeal of the death sentence, ABC News reported. Because Roof represented himself during the sentencing phase, he would also be responsible for filing an appeal, according to ABC News.

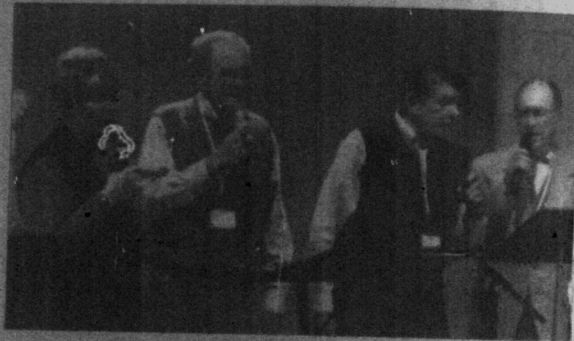
Roof is the first person sentenced to death for a federal hate crime. He also faces state charges punishable by death, but a date for the state trial has not been set.

A memorial to the victims remains on Emanuel AME's website. "In Loving Memory, Gone But Never Forgotten," accompanies photos of the victims. "Thank you to all who have prayed, sent cards, gifts, and for other acts of kindness as we continue to grieve and heal."

Just for the Record



The newly elected officers of the **MISSISSIPPI SINGING CHURCHMEN** for 2016-2017 are Byron Green, Central Director; Joel Worley, North Director; Matthew Gaddy, President-Elect; Eric McNeir, President; Lance Word, Secretary; Kris Smith, South Director. The Churchmen are sponsored by the Church Music Department, MBCB, Slater Murphy, director, and under the direction of Milfred Valentine.



The Kings Quartet of **FIRST CHURCH, MADISON**, sang for the Legacy Builders at their December meeting. Shown are Patsy Tolfeson, Pete Walker, Larry Greet, and Jim Derryberry.



The children's ministry of **FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA**, performed some of the songs from their Christmas musical, *The Power of the King*, for the residents of Golden Living Nursing Home. Their float won first place in the Eupora Christmas parade - float division.



LAMAR COUNTY ASSOCIATION was honored by receiving the Lion Hearted Award by the Pine Belt Lions Club for their service to the area. Receiving the award on behalf of the LBA is David Lee, LBA Mission Center Overseer, and presented by PBL president Skip McFarland.

In Other Church News

► **Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson**, is hosting five weeks of special services which began Jan. 15, 5 p.m. Charles Ramsey will be leading in studies of men of the Bible, followed by worship at 6 p.m. Andy Mullington, pastor.

HAMILTON CHURCH, HAMILTON, honored Robert Moore for 50 years of ministry. He was honored with a surprise fellowship. He was licensed on Dec. 11, 1966.



Eight churches from **PEARL RIVER ASSOCIATION** combined to present *Come Let Us Adore*, held Dec. 4 at Pearl River Community College. The 150+ member choir, orchestra, and drama team under the direction of Steve Howard. Participating churches were Bethel, First Poplarville, Juniper Grove, Oak Hill, Olive, Pine Grove, Spring Hill, and Steep Hollow.



The children of **BASSFIELD CHURCH, BASSFIELD**, presented a Christmas program Dec. 18 followed by the youth. Shown are Anna Clare Biss, Holly Ann Street, Lily Watts, Katy Watts, Zoey Daley, and Jenna Lynn Roberts.

Staff Changes



FIRST CHURCH, MORTON, has called Jep Peavy as pastor, along with his wife Rebekah. Shown, front row, are David Hollingsworth, the Peavys, and Ben Rogers; second row, Georgia Rogillio, Virginia Thompson, and Rhonda Torrence; back row, Tammy Moore, Fred Johnson, and Bennett Merchant.



FIRST CHURCH, CRYSTAL SPRINGS, has called Chris Teasley as pastor, shown with his wife, Jenny, and children Joe and Eva.

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QRW WPHTHDZN.
EWXZ STZPSQ-RPZ: SKJDSQ-CRWD

Clue: W = U

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Isaiah Forty: Eight

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

So. Baptist leaders weigh in on Obama's farewell

CHICAGO (BP) — Following U.S. President Barack Obama's farewell address Jan. 11 in Chicago, Southern Baptists who have met with him personally reflected on his liberal social policies, apparent commitment to family, and status as America's first black president.

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee President Frank S. Page in Nashville said he "watched the presidential speech with great interest" and has appreciated Obama's example as a husband and father, despite deep disagreements with the president on some issues.

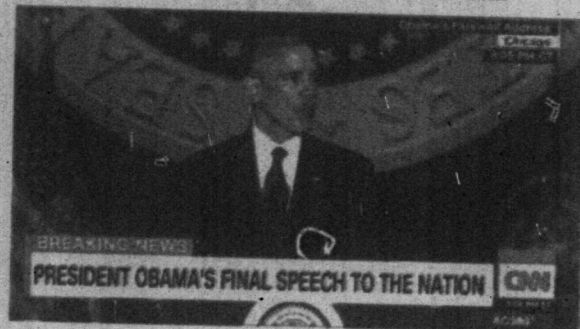
A member of Obama's Council on Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships from 2009-10, Page told Baptist Press in written comments, "I have interacted with him personally and find him to be greatly engaging and gregarious."

"I've also deeply disagreed with him on a number of social and moral issues and believe that our country is deeply divided because of his intractable adherence to an extremely liberal agenda. I have no doubt that President Barack Obama will be vilified by some historians and glorified by others," Page said.

Other Southern Baptists who met with Obama during his presidency include Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) President Russell Moore, former ERLC President Richard Land, and Montana Southern Baptist Convention executive director Barrett Duke.

Former SBC President Fred Luter received a congratulatory phone call from Obama two days after being elected the convention's first African American president.

Obama's speech, delivered on the eve of Donald Trump's first press conference as president-elect, outlined four "challenges to our democracy" and touched on social issues that have divided him at times from social conservatives.



The four challenges Obama noted were lack of economic opportunity for some Americans, racial division, disagreement on basic facts surrounding certain issues, and taking democracy for granted.

The nearly hour-long speech referenced lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights on four occasions, at one point classifying "LGBT rights" among "big global fights" from which "we cannot withdraw."

Racial justice and reconciliation was a major theme of the speech. "Race relations are better than they were 10, or 20, or 30 years ago," Obama said. "We're still not where we need to be, and all of us have more work to do."

Anti-discrimination laws must be upheld, Obama said, and "hearts must change." Later, he referenced the 2015 murder of nine black worshippers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., by a self-described white supremacist.

Land, who retired in 2013 after 25 years as head of the ERLC and its predecessor organization, the Christian Life Commission, told Baptist Press (BP) he met with Obama twice.

"In a country where there is increasing family dislocation," Land said, it has been "important that [Obama] has given every indication of being a devoted

husband and father." He added that electing an African American president "says something really important and really good about our country."

However, Land said he is "disappointed" Obama "has not used the occasion of being the first African American president to bring about greater racial reconciliation."

Regarding foreign policy, Land said he disagrees with Obama's response to situations in Iran, Iraq and Syria among other global hotspots.

Domestically, the president's Affordable Care Act, pro-abortion policies, "radically liberal" Supreme Court nominees, and "championing" of the pro-gay agenda drew criticism from Land.

Duke, a former ERLC vice president for public policy and research who met with Obama at least twice, told BP he is "glad" for "the opportunity to meet and work with our nation's first African American president."

"While we knew we disagreed on many substantive matters, President Obama was very gracious and respectful toward me," Duke said in written comments. "He is a man of deep, personal convictions, and he stood by his convictions. However, I found him to be very thoughtful and open to counsel on matters of common interest."

OBITUARY

John Herbert Sailhamer, 70, an evangelical Old Testament scholar and author who taught at two Southern Baptist seminaries and was president of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2000, died Jan. 9 after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease and Lewy Body Dementia. Sailhamer earned a bachelor of arts degree in journalism from California State University at Long Beach and worked as a general assignments reporter for the Dallas Morning News before completing a master of theology degree in Old Testament from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1974, a master of arts degree in Semitic languages from UCLA in 1976, and a doctor of philosophy degree in ancient Near East languages and literature from UCLA in 1981. He was ordained by the Evangelical Free



SAILHAMER

Church of America in 1983. His book, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, published in 2009, was called his *magnum opus* and was listed among Amazon.com's top 100 sellers. He served on the review and editorial teams for the New Living Translation and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. His 36-year teaching career began in 1975 at Los Angeles Bible College and continued at Biola University, Bethel Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Western Seminary, and Southeastern Seminary. In 2006, he joined the faculty at Gateway Seminary (formerly Golden Gate Seminary) in California, where he served until his retirement in 2012. Sailhamer is survived by Patty Engdahl Sailhamer, his wife of 45 years; his children David Sailhamer, Elizabeth Soukup, John Sailhamer, and Peter Sailhamer; eight grandchildren; brother Paul Sailhamer; and sister Claudette Miller. He is preceded in death by his parents Claude and Belva Sailhamer. A memorial service and celebration of his life was held Jan. 13 at the First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, Ca. He was interred near his birthplace of Moline, Ill.

Sudan court frees pastor after second arrest

KHARTOUM, Sudan (BP) — A court in Khartoum, Sudan, released a pastor from prison Jan. 2 after acquitting him of charges punishable by the death penalty, sources said.

Kwa (also spelled Kuwa) Shamaal was acquitted of charges ranging from spying to inciting hatred against the government, his attorney Muhanad Nur said.

"Yes, he was released today after the court found that he was not guilty of the charges brought against him," said Nur, part of the team of lawyers defending Shamaal and three other Christians.

Shamaal, head of missions of the Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC), had been arrested at his home without charges more than a year ago. Three other Christians are also facing charges, and Nur expressed hope for their release. The next court hearing is scheduled for Jan. 9.

The court charged Shamaal's colleague Hassan Abdelrahman Tawor, Czech aid worker Petr Jasek, and Abdulmonem Abdumawla of Darfur with crimes against the state punishable by death. The charges include espionage, waging war against the state, gathering false news in



KWA SHAMAAL

formation, and inciting hatred between classes.

Tawor, also a pastor, was arrested on the same day as Shamaal.

Shamaal was released three days after his 2015 arrest and had been required to report daily to the offices of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) until Jan. 16, 2016. He was re-arrested on May 25.

Both Shamaal and Tawor were charged with trying to

tarnish the image of Sudan's government by collecting information on Christian persecution and genocide in the Nuba Mountains. The pastors were accused of conducting intelligence activities and providing material support for Nuba rebels in South Kordofan under two charges that carry the death penalty: waging war against the state (Article 51 of the Sudanese Criminal Code) and spying (Article 53).

Arrested in December 2015 on similar charges were Jasek and Abdumawla, who initially said he was Muslim but later admitted he was Christian. Abdumawla was arrested after he began collecting money to help a friend, Ali Omer, who needed treatment for burns suffered in a student demonstration.

Abdumawla contacted Tawor, who donated money for Omer's treatment and thereby raised the ire of Sudanese authorities, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) said.

Prosecutors charged Jasek with "tarnishing Sudan's image" by documenting persecution. He is also charged with waging war against the state, reportedly based on an accusation that he gave money to "some individuals" in South Kordofan in 2012, allegedly including rebel fighters.

At one hearing, NISS official Abbas el Tahir accused the defendants of conducting "hostile activities against the state that threaten the national and social security" in Sudan, according to Netherlands-based Radio Dabanga.

Most SCOC members have roots among the ethnic Nuba in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan's

South Kordofan state, where the government is fighting an insurgency. The Nuba along with other Christians in Sudan face discrimination, as President Omar Al-Bashir has vowed to introduce a stricter version of Sharia (Islamic law) and recognize only Islamic culture and Arabic language.

The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Al-Bashir in connection with war crimes in Darfur. Due to its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations, Sudan

has been designated a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999, and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended the country remain on the list in its 2016 report.

Sudan ranked eighth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2016 World Watch List of countries where Christians face most persecution.

Based on reporting by Morning Star News (morningstarnews.org), an independent news service focusing on the persecution of Christians worldwide. Edited for style and length.

NORTH KOREA

cont. from p. 1

David Curry, president of Open Doors, said in a written statement the list clearly shows Christians in the West "need to advocate on behalf of those who do not have the same religious freedom privileges we do."

Curry and others have urged Trump, who will be inaugurated Jan. 20, to take steps in the opening days of his administration to protect international religious liberty. The 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative has drafted a letter and solicited signers urging the president-elect to retain or nominate in his first 100 days an ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom and a special advisor for religious minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia.

Both those positions in the U.S. State Department could be vacant by the end of January.

David Saperstein, whose work as ambassador-at-large the last two years has been commended by both conservatives and liberals, apparently will have to leave his post by the inauguration, according to a Trump transition memo first reported by The New York Times, World magazine reported in a Jan. 9 article.

Knox Thames, also highly regarded across the board for his service the last 16 months as the first special advisor for religious minorities, will lose his job Jan. 31 unless the Trump administration moves to retain him, World reported.

While most North Korea persecution involves enforcement of cult-like worship of its leader Kim Jong Un, Muslim extremism in many of the other countries on the list remained the primary force driving persecution last year, with Islamic forces instigating it in 35 of the 50 countries, according to Open Doors.

Persecution increased especially in South and Southeast Asia, reaching levels of violence experienced in such areas as the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, Open Doors reported. In Asia, the persecution is "fueled by dramatic religious nationalism and government insecurity," according to Open Doors. Commonly, unstable governments scapegoated Christians.

Pakistan, which moved from No. 6 to No. 4 this year, was the most violent country, surpassing the violence in northern Nigeria by Muslims against Christians.

India reached its highest ranking ever at No. 15 because of Hindu violence toward Christians.

In its research to compile the World Watch List, Open

Doors measures the freedom of Christians in five areas of life: private, family, community, national, and church. Its researchers also gauge the degree of violence.

Release of the latest Open Doors list followed a Dec. 30 report of a study by the Italian-based Center for Studies on New Religions, which found Christians are the world's most persecuted faith group.

Using an admittedly broader definition of dying for religious reasons, the study reported nearly 90,000 Christians died for their faith in 2016, according to the International Business Times.

The full report of the 2017 Open Doors World Watch List is available at opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/.

Last year, the State Department designated 10 "countries of particular concern," a category reserved for especially severe violators of religious liberty: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

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College and Seminary News

► As part of the Mississippi Bicentennial celebration, **Mississippi College** is hosting an event celebrating the university's creation over 190 years ago. MC is the state's oldest institution of higher learning and the second oldest Baptist college in the United States. A Founders Day convocation will be held at First Church, Clinton, Jan. 31, at 10:50 a.m. Cindy Townsend, speaker.

► The following graduates with Mississippi ties received degrees during **New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary** and **Leveall College** commencement service Dec. 17.

Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry

Gary D. Havlin, Bogalusa, Louisiana
Charles E. Young, Cleveland, Mississippi

Master of Arts in Christian Apologetics

Larry Dyson Bryant, New Albany, Mississippi

Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry

Tyler Charles Turner, Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Master of Arts in Theological Studies

Kenny Odell Goff, Pearl, Mississippi

Master of Divinity

Anson F. Pullington Jr., Terry, Mississippi
Drew Richardson, Belden, Mississippi
Chris Wayne Robbins, Petal, Mississippi

Doctor of Ministry

Joshua Hollis Braddy, Picayune, Mississippi

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

BROOKHAVEN

cont. from p. 1

us. We've broken it down into four phases:

■ Pray (for specific lost friends to come to Christ).

■ Learn (one spiritual conversation).

■ Invite (unchurched people to your small group).

■ Share (the Gospel at least one time).

Warnock described how the last few months have gone. "We did it pretty much by the book. The people here have bought into the big picture. I used selected Scriptures from Ephesians to tie into the weekly theme and Jeff [Doremus] led the Sunday School through the curriculum."

Doremus is associate pastor for education. The curriculum titled, *The Unvarnished Truth*, from by LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville was put into the hands of all the adult Sunday School teachers.

"All of our adult classes bought in," Doremus said. "For them to take six weeks out of their usual curriculum and just wholesale out was a big deal. We purposely didn't use the word, 'evangelism,' because of preconceived thoughts. We presented it as a way to tell their stories about how God had changed their lives."

"We had seven classes, and in each one we'd ask people, 'Hey, would you like to tell your story about how God has changed your life? A lot of unity came from that, because people love to hear other people's stories. It seemed to resonate with each class.'"

"We have church-wide discipleship classes," Warnock said. "We call it 'Sundays at Five,' and the classes are for children, youth, and adults. We do this on a semester schedule, and the classes meet while we have what is called *Legacy Worship* for adults. Jeff taught them how to develop their testimonies and share them in two or three minutes."

"Our church's theme this year is #tellsomeone," Warnock continued. "I'll preach from Acts 8, 9, and 10 through January, and focus on this again February 25-26 with a Tell Someone revival. Then, February 28 is our area Tell Me Rally, and on September 24 we'll have an associational Tell Everyone Rally with Fred Luter. We'll have that at the high school football field."

Luter is pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans and a former two-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Warnock spoke well of the resources available to him and other pastors and churches. "That's the reason I love Mis-

issippi Baptists. The [Mississippi Baptist Convention] is leading the way. The convention says, 'We are putting a focus on this again, we're giving you the tools, and challenging you to challenge your members.' Are we too busy to see that person in front of us we need to engage? It's time to seek God again."

"We found there were people in Jeff's class you never thought would have come and participated. God was doing a work in their lives."

"We would train them to share their stories," Doremus said. "We took them to the I Am Second website so they could see others sharing their testimonies. You find out about people as they share their stories. They enjoyed hearing each other."

"We saw an increase in worship attendance and Sunday School, about eight percent," Warnock pointed out. "For us, in a stable community and church, that shows excitement. People were bringing their friends and that is just preparation for this year."


Warnock was asked about the benefits he saw in the program for his pastor peers.

"It's a great tool for busy pastors," he said. "It helps them help their people do the work they were called to do. We are called to make disciples, and when you get tired of doing all the things that keep you from making disciples, you'll appreciate these resources."

"It wasn't just an eight-week campaign for us. It helped us refocus the life of our church."

For more information on how to participate in the Tell Me, Tell Someone statewide campaign now underway, visit mbcb.org/tellsomeone. E-mail: sbell@mbcb.org.

Tell Me, Tell Someone is supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.



**EVANGELIST
PHIL GLISSON**
3638 MACON RD.,
MEMPHIS, TN 38127
901-374-3459, 901-237-6062
PHILGLISSON.ORG

God has been good to allow me to work with so many dedicated Mississippi pastors over the years. I have had the privilege of serving churches all around the state. One of the greatest joys I get in life as an evangelist and a pastor's son is to be able to seek to complement another pastor's ministry and help edify his church. If I can ever be of service to you, let me know. My goal will be to bless the Lord, you

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name!" (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this special recognition and honor medium. This feature is helpful to be placed in further remembrance and respect. Those who are and have been are listed on this special feature.

DECEMBER 1-15

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Descendants of Mrs. Martha N. Whittington
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Mac Campbell
Don & Suzanne Honea
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The Tarver Foundation
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DECEMBER 16-31

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BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

Rebellion's Cycle • Judges 2:11-19

Have you ever disciplined a strong-willed fourteen year old? Between his eighth and ninth grades our nephew came to live with us. Mark and I set down the rules just as we had with our own son. We told him, "If you follow the rules, then there will be positive consequences for your good behavior and life will be fun. But if you do not follow the rules, then there will be negative consequences and you will not be happy." We were what I call "if...then" parents. He understood the rules and the consequences; and the vast majority of our time together was absolutely wonderful.

I believe God parents His children in the same manner. Let me give you an example. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God said to Solomon, "If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." God set out the rules and He explained the positive consequences. Following the result of obedience, God told Solomon of the negative consequences of disobedience. He said, "But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them..." (2 Chronicles 7:19-20a, NKJV). God clearly explained

the rules and the consequences. This is the same thing God told Moses in Deuteronomy 28.

Why is God willing to punish His people or to remove His hand of protection from them? Is He being mean and hateful? Is He just waiting for an opportunity to zap us when we sin? No! Absolutely not!! God loved the Children of Israel, and He loves you and me so very much that He does not want His children to stay in their disobedience and rebellion. God brings righteous judgment on His rebellious people, with the goal of their repentance. He longs for us to repent and return back to Him.

The book of Judges exemplifies the cycle of rebellion and God's efforts to bring His people back in right relationship with Him. What is the cycle of rebellion? First, the Israelites followed and obeyed God. Second, they became complacent about their faith. Third, they sinned against God, abandoning Him to worship other gods. Fourth, God would remove His hand of protection and allow them to be oppressed.

Fifth, the people repented and cried out for God's help. Sixth, God rescued the Israelites and they worshiped Him again. This cycle was repeated over and over again throughout the Old Testament. Let's consider the Israelites after Joshua's death.

Abandonment – Judges 2:11-13

Under Joshua's command, the Israelites worshiped God and destroyed their enemies. Following Joshua's death, the tribes continued to conquer the land but chose not to destroy their enemies. Instead, their enemies lived

among them and worshiped their own gods. The Israelites began a spiraling pattern by abandoning their worship of God alone and instead participating in idol worship. They worshiped the Canaanite gods.

Oppression – Judges 2:14-15

God loved His people so much that He removed His protection from the rebellious Israelites, allowing them to suffer at the hands of unconquered pagan groups. God frustrated the efforts

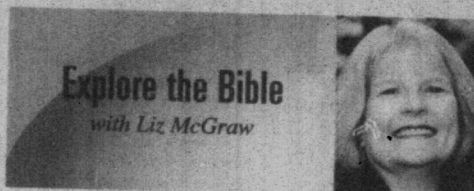
of the Israelites to fight for themselves. The Lord's removal of His hand was an act of God's loving discipline of His people. He disciplined them so they would repent and turn back to Him. Verse 15 says, "And they (the Israelites) were greatly distressed."

Repentance (Judges 2:16-19)

God raised up judges who rescued the oppressed Israelites and led the people to reform. They turned back to God for a time; however, once the judge died, the Israelites returned to their sinful pattern. They returned to their cycle of rebellion.

We might be tempted to point our self-righteous fingers at the Israelites. How could they do such a thing? Surely we would never turn our backs on God. Oh really?? When we put anything above God, we worship other idols. I'm guilty. How about you? God alone is worthy of worship. Believers who turn their back on God should prepare themselves for His discipline – either overt or through turning them over to the consequences of their actions. God provides relief from His discipline through repentance and a return to Him.

McGraw is development director of Crossroads SW Counseling Center, a conference speaker, life coach, and member of Woodville Church.



Explore the Bible

with Liz McGraw

Praying with Joy • Philippians 1:3-11

The next 6 weeks we will be studying lessons on Joy from Paul's letter to the Philippians. This unit of study is titled, "Thrive: Living in Real Joy." One major historical fact that we need to remember is that the Apostle Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this letter about joy. The six lessons of the unit are Praying with Joy, Sharing with Joy, Following with Joy, Growing with Joy, Practicing Joy, and Giving with Joy.

H. I. Hester, author of the classic New Testament textbook, *The Heart of the New Testament*, tells us Paul received great encouragement during his imprisonment in Rome from his churches. Hester writes, "The church at Philippi was not only one of the best of these but was composed of Christians who deeply and genuinely loved Paul. In return, Paul loved them with an abiding affection. He referred to them as his 'joy and crown.'" Hester's note about Paul referring to the Philippians as his "joy and crown" comes from Philippians 4:1 (HCSB), "So then, in this way, my dearly loved brothers, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord, dear friends."

Hester tells us the Book of Philippians is Paul's most informal, intimate and revealing epistle. *The Heart of the New Testament* calls this letter "a spontaneous expression of love and gratitude." Though it was written

from prison amid depressing circumstances it rings with joy, confidence, faith and hope." Our challenge during this study is to grow in our understanding of how and why Paul had such real joy while a prisoner chained to a guard in the Roman prison.

To understand the lessons in this unit of study and more importantly to get the full meaning of emphasis on joy in Paul's letter to his friends at Philippi, we need to understand what Paul means by "joy." Mostly Paul uses the Greek word "chara" to tell us about New Testament "joy." Paul is not the only New Testament writer to use "chara" or "joy."

Matthew uses this word to explain how the wise men felt when they followed the star and found Jesus. "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped Him." Matthew 2:10-11 (HCSB). Matthew also uses "chara" in Matthew 28:8 to explain how the women felt when they left the empty tomb

to go tell the disciples that Jesus was raised from the dead.

The angels in Luke 2:10 & 11 announced the "great joy that will be for all people: today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David." Luke 2:19-11 (HCSB). John tells us in John 16:22 that this "chara" joy is something no man can take away. Paul tells us in Romans 15:13 that it is God, Himself, who fills us with this joy [in fact, we cannot get it any other way].

In discussing this joy John writes, "Your hearts will rejoice, and no one will rob you of your joy." John 16:22c



Bible Studies for Life

with Don Hicks

(HCSB). Paul prayed in his letter to the Romans, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit," Romans 15:13. Paul tells the Galatians, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law," Galatians 5:22-23 (HCSB).

Another clue about the result of having this fruit of joy is found in the first verse of today's focal passage, "I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you," Philippians 1:3 (HCSB). Christians living in this Holy Spirit given joy, enjoy each other with a memorable enduring love. These memories of the fruit of joy cause one to have a deep appreciation. Paul says it this way, "always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer," Philippians 1:4 (HCSB). This gives us the title of today's Bible lesson, "Praying with Joy."

Paul lists some of the tangible reasons for the joy he has in the Philippians church:

1. Partnership in the gospel from the first day.
2. Certainty that God will complete the good work He began in them.
3. That God would carry that work to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.
4. It is right for Paul to think this way about the Philippians because they are in his heart
 - a. As partners in grace
 - b. Partners in his imprisonment
 - c. Partners in his defense
 - d. Partners in establishing the Gospel.

Hicks is associational missions director for Jasper Association in Bay Springs.

Boston planters embrace outreach flexibility

BOSTON (BP) — Boston church planting catalyst Joe Souza has developed a unique strategy for working in the city: prayer driving.

As a lifelong urbanite and urban church planter in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Orlando, Fl.; and now Boston, Ma., Souza frequently ponders how to reach the vast numbers of distinctive city dwellers, many of whom have radically different lifestyles from the average Christian.

"I pray, I cry, and I ask God in desperation, 'Father, do something here that these people may understand that You are God,'" said Souza, who also is pastor of Celebration Church in Boston's historic Charlestown neighborhood. He is not alone. Dozens of church planters have answered God's call in recent years to spread the Gospel in New England cities such as Boston.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the growth of urban city dwellers is outpacing the growth of the general population. The southernmost New England states are following this trend and actually have higher than average rates of urban dwellers.

Eighty-eight percent of Connecticut's population live in urban areas while the figure rises to more than 90% in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

Learning on the job

Gary Knighton, a former youth pastor, first connected with urban church plant Faith Fellowship when some University of Hartford students invited him to visit after an evangelism conference in 2014. A native of Bloomfield, Ct., Knighton provided a New Englander's perspective on reaching the lost as well as a wealth of connections with local believers who could advise the new church planter.

"I ended up becoming kind of their indigenous guru because I've been here for so long," Knighton said. "I kind of knew the spiritual climate and spiritual resources available."

Despite his familiarity with New England, Knighton had spent more time in the suburbs than the city. While transitioning to an urban area, he learned on the job through reading books, connecting with experienced leaders and taking on increased responsibility, starting as community outreach pastor, becoming Faith Fellowship's executive pastor, and now lead pastor.

Most importantly, he grew by learning a new level of dependence on God and he frequently finds himself praying, "Lord, help me to drop my preferences in order to reach the people group [urbanites] You want me to reach."

Change of plans

Souza, meanwhile, had years of experience in church planting but had never lived in New England before coming to Boston to help First Brazilian Church plant



COMMUNITY OUTREACH — Joe Souza (left) and Celebration Church served free Thanksgiving meals to about 100 members of the Charlestown community.

a new church. He spent his first 18 months in Boston learning the culture, developing a strategy, and talking with other church planters and leaders.

During that time, God changed his plans about the new church plant. Originally intended to be an outreach to Brazilians, God impressed on Souza and other leaders that, "If we were just to target the Brazilian population, we would be missing a huge chunk of the population in our own backyard."

Out of this conviction, Souza planted Celebration Church, an English-speaking church with a Brazilian flair that reaches many second-generation immigrants and Brazilian/American couples. This Spirit-led direction illustrates what many believe — a period of time dedicated to settling into the community and praying over plans is one of the most foundational elements of preparing to plant a church.

David Butler, the North American Mission Board's Send City missionary in Boston, noted that demographics and onsite exegesis are helpful but have limits. "It's absolutely essential to live in the community for at least a year. Living with and becoming a part of the fabric of a community or neighborhood allows you to go beyond knowing about to knowing personally."

Leading from the pew

Both Knighton and Souza described two key segments in urban church plants: millennials and the "highly forgotten" people.

As pastor of a church plant located on a university campus and volunteer chaplain at the University of Hartford, Knighton

frequently interacts with college students and millennials, which has altered his perspective about ministry.

"Millennials, there's 100 different things pulling at their attention. Church is [only] one of the things they do, and not the most important thing," Knighton said.

This view of church as one of many things is now prevalent even among Christians, and it has caused Knighton to develop a more relational, less program-based approach to ministry as he learns "to lead from the pew more than the pulpit."

"They need people who are older to pour into their lives," Knighton said, describing millennials' unique needs such as mentors to help them learn life skills, deal with struggles like depression, and simply spend time with them.

This type of discipleship requires a significant investment of time outside of scheduled church events, an approach that is different from the way the church operated in past years. After growing up in an environment focused on church activities, Knighton has had to re-learn how to minister to people.

"I kind of had to model things in my life that weren't modeled for me," he said.

At the other end of the spectrum are the "highly forgotten," as Souza describes them. "I spend time with people who are homosexuals, prostitutes, pimps. That comes with being an urban church planter. It's a different world. You have to come up with alternate ways to preach the Gospel."

God has blessed Celebration Church with opportunities to reach out to people such as prostitutes and gang members who are often overlooked by many



AMAZING CHURCH — Part of Celebration Church's prayer strategy includes hosting an overnight prayer vigil every other month. "We're just a rowdy Brazilian church in an Irish-Catholic neighborhood," Souza said, "but what God has done is amazing." (BP photo)

in the church. Although some Christians might feel reluctant to spend time with them, Souza notes that this is exactly what Jesus did — and He is still in the business of changing the lives of those who seem hopeless.

Tommy

One example is a current church member, Tommy (not his real name), who was once heavily involved in a gang. After meeting a Christian who was sharing the Gospel on the street, Tommy had an encounter with Jesus which led to a radical conversion and life change.

Today Tommy is inverted in reaching out to others on the streets, and the church is rallying around him, others like him, and this type of ministry.

Knighton agreed that church planters must be prepared to work with people who don't live a pretty life, noting that, for many, "normality is skewed."

"You can't be afraid to engage with certain types of people," he said. "You can't be afraid of a mess. You've got to meet people where they are."

A previous job as a counselor for parolees proved most helpful in preparing Knighton to work with broken urbanites. Even those who are not struggling with drugs, alcohol, and crime have felt needs to which many suburbanites can't relate like employment, medical awareness, and education.

These needs, Knighton said, give urban church planters distinct opportunities to engage with the community holistically.

Souza added that urban church planters must be in different parts of the city at different times of day to reach the most people. "It's definitely important to understand the vibe of the city during office hours and during off hours. For someone to be successful in urban church planting, they need to understand the uniqueness of ministry around the clock, in a sense."

Opportunities to engage people with the Gospel don't always happen at convenient times or in traditional places, Souza noted. "It may not be a Sunday morning meeting. It may be a meeting at Dunkin' Donuts."

Following God, not trends

Butler agreed that meeting people where they are is one of the most important mindsets an urban church planter can cultivate. "The apologetic for church planting in any urban setting, but especially Boston, is authenticity," he said, adding that the goal of church planting is "to love the people and build bridges of grace strong enough to bear the weight of truth."

While a plethora of books and articles have been published on church planting and such information can often be helpful, Knighton advises planters to find their own style of leading — one that is natural for their personality and fits within their broader context.

He also advised church planters to counter pressure to get "too fancy, too fast."

"Unfortunately, there's this growing model of trying to start big on the first Sunday," Knighton said. "You need to start with what you can sustain and go from there."

Souza mentioned the possibility that, with the increased attention church planting has received in recent years, a pastor could feel attracted to church planting not out of obedience to God but out of ambition or trendiness, which can lead to selfishness and pride.

"The greatest thing that I've learned is we can't get credit for this. It's really God at work," Souza said. "He can even use a messed-up Brazilian from Rio de Janeiro in a church planting movement."

When Souza first moved to Massachusetts in the early 2000s, 87% of church plants in greater Boston were folding within two to four years. In fact, when Souza was asked to become the church planting catalyst for the area, it was by default — he was the only local church planter at that time who had successfully launched but in the past few years, God has been doing something amazing in New England through church plants with more than 115 in the Baptist Convention of New England since 2010.

Today's plants are surviving, at a rate of 90% and even reproducing.